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JOHN OF ANTIOCH, SAINT CHRYSOSTOM.

There is an Oriental adage to the effect that a man can never have but one mother. He may have more than one wife; his children may die and be succeeded by others; his friends may forsake him, but it is rarely impossible to replace them; riches may vanish, but the world is wide, and they may be accumulated a second time; health may be lost or impaired, but while life endures the most hopeless invalid seldom despairs of its reëstablishment. But by no possibility can a good mother's devotion and love and self-sacrificing, and anticipation and yearning, and heart pains and sobs and sorrows, and sighings and anxieties, and pleadings and admiration, and encouragement and sustaining sympathy, and pride and honor, and hope and patience and prayers ever be entirely exhibited by another, howsoever fond and consecrated. So it is that Oriental young men are, and have been from the earliest times, remarkably devoted to their mothers, unless they have been monsters in human shape, or those who have wanted a mother's early training and care. But even many of the very worst that have made history awful have kept one redeeming quality—their treatment of their mothers.

It is one of the chief delights of the study of some of the great characters of Christianity to see what a debt of gratitude they owed for their mothers' care and love, how largely their future was the result of the instruction and training given them in youth, and how the good impulses then imbibed enabled them to follow the right, to know it whenever encountered throughout their lives. Nomea, Monica, and Anthusa, noble, unselfish mothers, are three women whose names rank with those of all ages for distinguished training of their young sons, who afterwards were to shine among their fellows by reason of some one virtue, or more than one, received from their mothers. And how true this is of three sons of these good women: Gregory, Augustine, and John!

The third of those wonderful men was born in Antioch, 347 A.D. His father was a military officer who had won distinction, and his mother was the devoted Anthusa, who is a noble example among the Christian women of antiquity. It is said that her consistency and devotion made her a favorite even with the heathen, and the great pagan rhetorician, afterwards the teacher of her son, exclaimed: "Ah, what wonderful women there are among the Christians!" John's father died not long after the birth of his son, without having, so far as is known, embraced Christianity. So the education of this pagan soldier's son fell upon the mother, who found herself a widow at twenty and whose life thenceforth was to be given to the nurture of the son and the worshipful memory of the father. To the former she taught her own Christian conceptions and planted in his soul the germs of piety which later flowered and brought forth fruit abundantly for himself and the whole Church. He became confirmed in the belief of his mother's admonitions and Bible teachings, so that he was secure against the seductions of heathenism.

John's literary and scholastic training was received from Libanius, the great Sophist of the Greeks, perhaps the greatest then living. His school at Antioch flourished, the renowned teacher having spent a number of years at Athens in the ardent hope of finding all the learning he required. He was greatly interested in his young pupil John, the son of the soldier, and his admiration for his talents and abilities was so great, we may readily believe, that the wily pedagogue sought to offset the mother's precepts, and to use "his utmost arts and exhibit all that was most captivating in Grecian philosophy and poetry to enthrall the imagination of his promising pupil." Libanius, in one of his epistles, rejoices at John's success. It was the hope and plan of Libanius to establish the young scholar in the school as his assistant and successor, in the maintenance of the doctrines and the defense of paganism. The old Sophist, we are told, when about to die, on being asked whom he wished for his successor, is said to have sadly replied: "John, if only the Christians had not carried him away."

Although he became a rhetorician, and chose the profession

of the law and was thoroughly successful (and in Antioch, the pleasure-loving city of wealth and commercial importance, success in legal practice meant much to a young man of learning and ability), the impulses of John were all toward the cultivation of divine things, and the sources of inspiration he found in the sacred writings of the Christianity of his mother. He devoted himself for three years to instruction by Bishop Meletius, received baptism at his hands, and was named by him a reader in the Church.

But John wanted more service, more devotion, and under the inspiration of a zealous friend determined to enter one of the monasteries in the remote part of Syria; and the voice of the great Christian orator was like not to have been heard, being doomed by him to silence, or to exhaust itself in prayers and ejaculations audible only to his God and himself. But the devoted mother again saved the Church this great loss. Dean Milman relates the exceeding beauty and touching character of her pleading with her son:

"As soon as she learned his determination to retire to a distant region, she took him by the hand, she led him to her chamber, she made him sit by her on the bed in which she had borne him, and burst out into tears and into language more sad than tears. She spoke of the cares and troubles of widowhood; grievous as they had been, she had ever one consolation—the gazing on his face and beholding in him the image of his departed father. Before he could speak he had thus been her comfort and joy. She reminded him of the fidelity with which she had administered the paternal property. 'Think not,' she said, 'that I would reproach you with these things. I have but one favor to entreat—make me not a second time a widow; awaken not again my slumbering sorrows. Wait at least for my death; perhaps I shall depart before long. When you have laid me in the earth, and reunited my bones to those of your father, then travel wherever thou wilt, even beyond the sea; but as long as I live endure to dwell in my house, and offend not God by afflicting your mother, who is at least blameless toward thee.'" ("History of Christianity," Vol. 3, p. 124.)

It is not strange that the young man could not resist, and he

abided with his mother till her death. In all his early years as Christian convert and theological student, his impulse seems to have been for self-discipline and practice of self-denial in some way that would be positive and known, and while acceding to his mother's entreaty to comfort and cheer her lonely life by his presence, we are told that he virtually turned his own home into a monastery. He secluded himself, and practiced the most rigid asceticism. He ate and slept little, and devoted much time to prayer. He maintained an almost unbroken silence, to prevent a relapse into the habit of censure or involuntary slander. (Dr. Schaff, p. 17.) His former legal associations were abandoned, and he was considered by those who had known him as unsociable and morose. (Ibid.) Two of his fellow-pupils joined him in his ascetic life, both of whom afterwards became very eminent in the councils of the Church. It was a constant grief and trial to John that these companions did not appear to him to preserve a rigid enough maintenance of their self-imposed vows. One of them, Theodore, afterwards Bishop of Mopsuestia, was weak enough to dwell much upon his attachment to a well-known young lady, and seriously contemplated abandoning his austere life and uniting himself in marriage with her. His resolution was a blow to John, who was moved by the incident to prepare his earliest known treatise, "An Exhortation to Theodore," in which, says Dr. Schaff, he employed all his oratorical arts of sad sympathy, tender entreaty, and bitter reproach and terrible warning to reclaim his friend to what he thought the surest and safest way to Heaven. "To sin," he wrote, "is human, but to persist in sin is devilish; to fall is not ruinous to the soul, but to remain upon the ground is." The plea had the desired effect. Faith and monasticism were one and the same thing to John, and failure in devotion and adherence to the latter was apostasy from the former.

In considering a work of this kind and a mother's inspiring it, the times and conditions of life which surrounded the young ecclesiastics must be borne in mind. To have the consecration of the secluded life of the ascetic, and enter the world by marriage was undoubtedly thought by John to be at the peril of

his companion's Christian character. It meant sharing in the activities and exposure to the temptations of social life in Antioch, with its partial preservation of heathen festivals, games, exhibitions, and practices, diviners, augurs, magicians, enchanters, the priests of Cybele, festivals of Adonis, and the worship of the Syrian symbol of universal deity, the sun, of which the city was the chief seat; it meant being surrounded by the "profligate of every age and by prostitutes, with their wantonness and shameless language." No wonder the young devotee was moved to write strongly. The example of one like Theodore would be followed by others of weakening faith, and John undoubtedly felt that every advance of heathendom must be resisted, every one of its blows warded off, and consequently used the most powerful weapons for offense and defense of which he was possessed, a ready pen and awe-inspiring, absorbing language. The result was he preserved to the Church a powerful bishop and one of the first of biblical scholars. And in this, too, was not the unconscious force of his mother's teaching and example portrayed, and did not John do for others what his mother had done for him? and is not this the chiefest way in which children honor their parents and repay their good offices?

But the young Antiochene lost his mother and he was left alone, free to cherish his purpose of a monastic life and devotion to his conception of "the true philosophy." Now about this time occurred a singular episode in his life and one which developed a weak spot in his character, which has subjected him to unfavorable criticism. Vacancies were occurring in the Syrian bishoprics, from frequent dispositions growing out of the controversies between orthodoxy and Arianism, and interposition of court influence. John and Basil, though not yet thirty years of age, attracted attention of clergy and people as suitable candidates for the episcopal office. John shrank from the responsibilities and vicissitudes of the high dignity. Doubtless he believed himself not sufficiently tried and experienced to undertake such a charge, and his subsequent course would warrant this opinion. He apparently consented to act in concert with Basil, but he secluded himself when the moment

came; and Basil, being assured that John had accepted the election to one of the vacant sees, was induced to withdraw his objections, and did the like in regard to another, and reluctantly submitted to the election.

Basil indeed found himself a bishop, but also found the treachery of his friend had been used to his prejudice, and though we are told that he upbraided John for his conduct, John regarded the matter simply as a "pious fraud" and believed and endeavored to strengthen the belief that the end justified the means. His justification took the form of six books—"On the Priesthood." While the ruse was successful and has been excused by many on account of the life of the consecrated father, it has never been forgotten. John cited many instances of a similar deceit, notably Abraham, Jacob, and David, and the apostle Paul's conduct in circumcising Timothy for the sake of the Jews (Acts xvi. 3), and in observing the ceremonial law in Jerusalem for the same reason (Acts xxi. 26).

Not long ago, in conversation, a gentleman of distinction, a man of great learning, refinement, and culture, made the shocking assertion that "anything is right in war and politics, *if it only succeeds!*" Perhaps John's Oriental nature and conscience which had witnessed the same thing done about him every day had hardened him to the belief that success alone is the proper test of action. And after all, is it not the fear of exposure by failure which is the basis for much of the honesty and virtue in which humankind glorifies itself? The trusted official who embezzles, speculates, and succeeds is admired by some for smartness, who if he had failed would be loudest in his denunciation. The following is an instance in which a modern vestry was guilty of conduct of this kind. A proposition was on foot to secure the liquidation of the debt of the Church. A wealthy gentleman offered after a certain amount was secured to donate the balance necessary to pay the debt. The vestry *borrowed* the money, reported that the sum was secured, and the gentleman, influenced by the belief, paid his subscription. There is very little that is new in human nature, after all. Some of the old fathers in their writings sought to teach that the crucifixion was the result of a mere cheat, and

that the devil lost the fallen race by being deceived into the belief that the Saviour was a mere man.

As already suggested, John, after his mother's death, forsook his old associations and went to the solitude of the mountains south of Antioch, and remained six years in theological study, meditation, and prayer. It seems as if this life was to him a spiritual and moral tonic. It gave him power to know himself and govern himself, so that he might be able to keep himself unspotted from the world. When exposed again to the temptations and seductions of city life, he would be so completely the master of himself that he could resist and overcome them and learn to denounce evil wherever it existed. He was a great believer in the monastic system of the proper sort; not a vain, idle existence in useless contemplation, but he believed in the apostolic exhortation to labor and do good.

Much of his time was occupied in the preparation of books on monasticism and celibacy. The emperor Valens, becoming envious, or jealous, or alarmed, or perhaps all combined, at the large number of young men who took up the life, and hence avoided their duties to the state, civil and military, issued an edict against these "followers of idleness," as they were termed. Parents clamored against this neglect of filial duty and appealed to the imperial authority to come to their aid. Hence the decree of Valens. John came forward as a zealous champion in his three books against the opponents of the monastic life. With youthful vehemence, flavored by Oriental rhetoric, he threatened misery in this life and all the pains of hell against the unnatural fathers who would force their sons to expose themselves to the guilt and danger of the world and forbid them to enter into the earthly society of angels, for so he called the monasteries of Antioch.

But there came a day when even John could no longer abide in the cells and huts of the monks, in his goat's-hair garments, rising before sunrise, singing and praying, reading and writing and performing manual labor, with no food save bread and water, except in case of sickness, sleeping on straw couches free from care and anxiety. Six years of this severe regimen told upon his health so that in 380 or 381 he returned to Antioch

with an impaired digestion, a shattered nervous system, with a tendency to headaches. Still he did not remit his labors. He was immediately ordained a deacon by his old friend and preceptor, Meletius, and about five years later, by the successor of this godly bishop, Flavianus, he was made a presbyter. And now began the work to which the remainder of his life was, as he believed, to be devoted—that of preacher to the voluptuous populace of the effeminate city of Antioch. And he did not long remain simply a good preacher; he became a popular favorite. His listeners seemed to delight in being told of their sins, which he never spared but in unmeasured terms rebuked. The prevailing vices he thundered against from the pulpit, warning his hearers by appeals to their consciences rather than their intellects. And the Antiochenes listened if they did not heed. Gibbon, with his wonderful descriptive powers, says that “among them fashion was the only law, pleasure the only pursuit, and splendor of dress and furniture was the only distinction. The arts of luxury were honored, the serious and manly virtues were ridiculed, and the contempt for female modesty and reverent age announced the universal corruption of the capital of the East.” When to these tastes and habits is added the fact that heresy and schism were rife in the Church, and rival parties contended for the ascendancy, it is a marvel that a plain, practical, severe preacher became the idol, and in the midst of all their pleasures and vices the people could not but listen to the commanding voice of the inspired orator, who told them that if the precepts of the gospel were to be compared with the actual practices of society the inferences would be that Christian men were not the disciples but the enemies of Christ.

A comprehensive notion of John's manner and method is given by Dr. Schaff: “John preached Sunday after Sunday, and during Lent sometimes twice or oftener during the week, even five days in succession, on the duties and responsibilities of Christians, and fearlessly attacked the immorality of the city. . . . He exemplified his preaching by a pure and blameless life, and soon . . . won the love of the whole congregation. Whenever he preached the church was crowded. He had to warn his hearers against pickpockets, who found an in-

viting harvest in these dense audiences." And though many of his hearers, after listening to his invectives against the theater and chariot races, would run to the circus to witness and indulge their fondness for these sports, there came a day when they flocked to the church, and gathered about their devoted preacher, who now became their consoler and comforter.

The year 387 was to be a memorable one to the citizens of Antioch. The great Emperor Theodosius needed money, and had his need heralded through the empire. The great cities were to contribute their share, Antioch among the rest. But the prospect of taxation for the glory of the distant Emperor meant possible interruption for many of the delights of the people. It meant less expenditure at the games, the circus, the baths, fewer fine clothes, more modest feasts, and in short it meant retrenchment everywhere. The better classes grumbled and complained, and their discontent spread to the poor, the lawless, and the whole company of irresponsibles, to whom grumbling and discontent meant nothing; these latter, as is usual in all times and places, soon formed a mob bent on riotous proceedings, and acts of violence began which multiplied till destruction grew apace. At last the mob, emboldened by non-resistance, gained the great Judgment Hall, and attacked the statues of the Emperor, his deceased wife, and their two sons, pulling them down and treating them with great indignity, breaking them in pieces and scattering the fragments.

But the reckoning came, and the wrath of the Emperor was sure. It was believed he would destroy the city. The gay and busy capital lost its holiday manner, and despair seized upon its citizens. Wild beasts, the flames, the sword did the bloody work of execution upon the confessedly guilty. Scourging and torture were employed to compel confessions. Time-serving spies made accusations, and the innocent were made to suffer as well as the guilty. Horror-stricken and dismayed with anxiety during the period of several months, they turned to the Church and their preacher, who now reminded them of their sins and their speedy punishment. The season of darkness was made the occasion by John of assuaging the fears, consoling the sorrowing, enforcing serious thoughts upon the dissolute.

Women of the highest rank, brought up with the utmost delicacy and accustomed to every luxury, were seen crowding around the gates, or in the outer Judgment Hall, unattended, repelled by the rude soldiery, but still clinging to the doors or, prostrate on the ground, listening to the clash of the scourges, the shrieks of the tortured victims, and the shouts of the executioners; one minute supposing they recognized the familiar voices of fathers, husbands, or brothers; or trembling lest those undergoing torture should denounce their relatives and friends. The preacher thundered these agonies in the ears of his congregations, and proclaimed the judgment day with its terrors and greater agony, thus turning the anxiety and horror to a religious advantage. He preached in season and out of season, day after day and at unaccustomed hours, to throngs of the miserable populace who crowded the churches. It is said the whole city became a church. And he warned his hearers with the words: "The clemency of the Emperor may forgive their guilt, but the Christians ought to be superior to the fear of death; they cannot be secure by pardon in this world, but they may be secure of immortality in the world to come." And when at last the announcement came that the Emperor forgave the city at the intercession of the aged Flavius, the preacher urged the people to "share their joy in abundance of good works and by thanking God not only that he had freed them from the recent calamity, but that he had permitted it to occur."

Thus John lived his unselfish and devoted life among the people of Antioch, preaching to them, giving away the rewards of his office to hospitals, to charity, and other good works. He became more and more endeared to them, and nothing would seem to have been more fitting, and mutually agreeable, than the relations of pastor and people.

But there came about a change in affairs that worked for the good of the great presbyter to all outward thinking, but perhaps his life had been longer and his declining years happier if the change had never taken place. Three exalted personages with evil natures were now to become connected with the fate of John, and secure a lasting record in history by that connection:

one for urging and securing his preferment, two for their cruel hatred and persecution and opposition to him—two men and one woman—Eutropius, the eunuch-minister of the Emperor Arcadius, Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria, and Eudoxia, the semibarbarian beauty who shared the Emperor's throne.

The eunuch Eutropius, hated by all except the sycophants of that day, feared even by these, for reasons of his own, suggested John the Presbyter of Antioch to the Emperor as the most suitable candidate for the vacant see of Constantinople. His chief motive for the suggestion was hatred of Theophilus, who aspired either to fill the pontiff's chair himself, or else to name the occupant. Eutropius's wish was law with the weak Emperor, and John was named. During a visit to distant parts of the empire, Eutropius had been attracted by the fame of the Presbyter of Antioch, and, as Festus, King Agrippa, and Felix had listened to Paul, he had heard John's preaching and knew nothing could be said against the fitness of the nominee. So it was that John succeeded the feeble Nectarius, successor to the great Gregory, and was consecrated February 26, 398, his enemy and rival, Theophilus, performing the ceremony, by the Emperor's command again at the suggestion of Eutropius. It had been thought necessary to kidnap John at Antioch and secretly convey him overland eight hundred miles to Constantinople, without informing him of the reason for the action or giving him time for preparation. The reasons were fear of resistance of the Antiochenes, or of John's refusal, or both.

John's career as preacher, begun at Antioch, was continued at Constantinople, and his influence and fame grew daily. His eloquence gained him admiration, and his pastoral care the love of the people. The vice and corruption against which his fulminations had been hurled in Antioch were but venial when compared with the same things in Constantinople. The great orator began to preach against the sins of the people generally, class after class; then he rebuked the licentiousness of the clergy, and forbade much that they had been allowed hitherto; then through the officials, courtiers, the great nobles, the grand dames of the city, the ladies of the court in ever-narrowing circles, till he reached the center and rebuked the Empress herself,

who grew jealous of his influence with the Emperor, and angered at his severity against sin and vice. She became his open enemy, and resolved upon his downfall.

There were not wanting willing instruments to aid her in accomplishing her end, and she soon set about her project. Unfortunately John had drawn upon himself the hatred of many of the clergy, whom he deprived of their privileges because of the impropriety of their conduct, and unfortunately also he became involved in a controversy with Theophilus of Alexandria on account of hospitality extended to some banished monks, in the course of which Theophilus remonstrated indignantly against protecting heretics and interfering in the affairs of another diocese. Theophilus immediately set out for Constantinople and found the situation of affairs and, aided by the Empress and disaffected clergy, charges were preferred against John. At a packed Council in a suburb of Constantinople he was declared guilty of immorality and treason, upon false and trivial charges. The Empress was aggrieved because it was alleged John had likened her to Jezebel, an insult which was of itself treasonable. The sentence of this so-called Synod of the Oak was degradation and life banishment. John, not wishing to cause shedding of blood, nor to seem to defy the imperial authority, yielded quietly and was conveyed to an interior villa on the Bithynian shore of the Bosphorus.

When it became known that he was gone, the people clamored for his return. They had had no voice in his trial, no hand in his disposition. An earthquake shock that night especially violent near the imperial palace aroused the city and terrified the superstitious and guilty Empress to urge a request for the revocation of the decree of banishment. In two days more the edict of recall was issued, and John returned, gladly welcomed by the people. We are told that he was met by the whole population—men, women, and children, all who could bore torches—and hymns were chanted before him as he proceeded to the great church. His enemies fled on all sides, and soon after Theophilus, on the demand of a free Council, left in the dead of night, and embarked for Alexandria. The triumph of John looked complete.

For a few months there appeared cordial reconciliation between pontiff and empress, and they vied with each other in protestations of regard. But John could not long brook the evil life surging about him, and began his onslaught afresh on all evil livers and evil doers. Eudoxia, after time had removed the traces of her fright and penitence, chafed at the thought of the pontiff's triumph, and was constantly inflamed by ill-disposed persons who misrepresented and applied personally the bold and indignant language of John. At length matters culminated in September, 403. The Empress had long had the desire to be crowned with the title Augusta, and receive like homage from the people on this account as was accorded the Emperor. The latter reluctantly consented, and a silver statue of Eudoxia was erected on a porphyry column in the public forum, before the Church of St. Sophia. The dedication of this image was attended with much revelry of an unseemly character. While the statue was being poised upon the pedestal, buffoons and women of the street burned incense at its base and circled around it in boisterous and lascivious dances (Grosvenor, "Constantinople," p. 497). The worship in the Great Church was interrupted, and John denounced the interruption and its cause, in his indignation using language which was construed as personally insulting to the Empress.

She immediately sought redress at the Emperor's hands, and the bitter struggle commenced once more and was continued till Easter of 404. The Emperor's edict suspended John, but he refused to yield, and he was finally condemned by a second Council for contumacy in resisting the former decree, and for a breach of ecclesiastical laws in resuming his authority while under condemnation of the Council.

On Good Friday, A.D. 404, the soldiers penetrated the Church of St. Sophia, and many acts of violence were committed. After vainly resisting, John withdrew and yielded to the imperial officers. Again he was conveyed to the Asiatic shore. Upon his departure flames broke out in the Cathedral and communicated to the Senate House, both of which were destroyed. John and his friends were accused of this act, but the real author was never discovered.

Again exile for life was the prelate's sentence, but he was not allowed to choose the place, and he was hurried across country to Cucusus, a little town in the mountainous district of Armenia. But his zeal and influence did not abate even under these adverse conditions. It has been said that the Eastern Church was almost wholly governed from his solitary cell. He was visited by persons of rank in disguise, and consulted by bishops and Church dignitaries throughout the East. This was too much for the enemies of the exile to endure, and orders were given for his removal still farther to Pityus, a town on the Euxine, even a more savage place on the verge of the empire. Thither he was hurriedly dragged, with no permission to obtain comforts or relief for his wasted body. The cortège reached the town of Comana, and the old man could go no farther. White robes were brought the dying patriarch, and he lay down in a little chapel after receiving the holy eucharist, and with difficulty repeating a prayer, sank back, saying, "Glory be to God for all things!" and fell asleep.

Thus died John, the son of the Roman soldier, the pupil of Libanius, the promising young lawyer, the catechumen, the recluse, the deacon and presbyter of Antioch, the patriarch of Constantinople—John Chrysostom, John with mouth of gold.

It were too long to tell more of his persecution or of the reasons for it; of his vast labors and his lasting influence. His writings alone make a fair ecclesiastical library—homilies, sermons, epistles, and commentary.

And is he forgotten?

Let the millions of faithful make answer who reverently pray:

Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee; and dost promise that when two or three are gathered together in Thy name Thou wilt grant their requests: Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of Thy servants, as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of Thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. Amen.

JAMES MAYNARD.

Knoxville, Tennessee.